

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution, comprising:  
a supplier database, the supplier database including product identifying information, product inventory information, and product pricing information for multiple independent participating product suppliers, wherein  
the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of  
participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and  
participating product retailers, and  
the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product category;  
an order database, the order database including order information pertaining to  
pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product retailers, and retail product purchasers, and  
fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers; and  
a programmed order processor operatively linked to the supplier database and the order database, the processor being programmed for  
automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing information, and product inventory information from the multiple participating product suppliers and entering the information into the supplier database,  
automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the multiple participating product suppliers,  
automatically entering the received order information into the order database,

1 automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the supplier  
2 database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order and  
3 available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier,  
4 automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each product  
5 purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from the  
6 corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order,  
7 automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to each  
8 delivered product,  
9 automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each delivered  
10 product in the supplier database, and  
11 automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered product.

- 12 2. The system of Claim 1, wherein the multiple independent participating product suppliers  
13 may further include product content providers.
- 14 3. The system of Claim 1, wherein the processor is further programmed for automatically  
15 issuing instructions for shipment of a delivered product from a corresponding participating  
16 product supplier to the participating product supplier with whom the product purchaser  
17 placed the order.
- 18 4. The system of Claim 3, wherein:  
19 the corresponding participating product supplier is a participating product retailer; and  
20 the participating product supplier with whom the product purchaser placed the order is a  
21 participating product retailer.
- 22 5. The system of Claim 1, wherein the processor is further programmed for automatically  
23 issuing instructions for shipment of a delivered product from a corresponding participating  
24 product supplier to the product purchaser.
- 25 6. The system of Claim 5, wherein:  
26 the corresponding participating product supplier is a participating product retailer; and  
27 the participating product supplier with whom the product purchaser placed the order is a  
28 participating product retailer.
- 29 7. The system of Claim 1, wherein the processor is further programmed for at least one of:

1 enabling a first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of the multiple  
2 participating product suppliers from which ordered products, listed in orders placed  
3 with the first participating supplier, may be delivered to a product purchaser; and  
4 enabling the first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of products  
5 available from another of the multiple participating product supplier from which  
6 ordered products, listed in orders placed with the first participating supplier, may be  
7 delivered to a product purchaser.

- 8 8. The system of Claim 1, wherein the processor is further programmed for at least one of:  
9 enabling a first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of the multiple  
10 participating product suppliers for which ordered products, listed in orders placed with  
11 the eligible subset of the multiple participating product suppliers, are available for  
12 delivery to a product purchaser; and  
13 enabling the first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of products  
14 available from the first participating product supplier from which ordered products,  
15 listed in orders placed with another of the multiple participating product suppliers, are  
16 available for delivery to a product purchaser.
- 17 9. A multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution, comprising:  
18 a retailer database, the retailer database including product identifying information, product  
19 inventory information, and product pricing information for multiple independent  
20 participating product retailers, wherein the multiple independent product retailers offer  
21 products of a common product category;  
22 an order database, the order database including order information pertaining to  
23 pending orders placed with multiple participating product retailers by multiple  
24 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product  
25 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating  
26 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product  
27 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product  
28 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and  
29 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product retailers by multiple product  
30 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product retailers; and

- 1 a programmed order processor operatively linked to the retailer database and the order  
2 database, the processor being programmed for  
3 automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing information,  
4 and product inventory information from the multiple participating product retailers  
5 and entering the information into the retailer database,  
6 automatically receiving, from multiple participating product retailers, order information  
7 pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the multiple  
8 participating product retailers,  
9 automatically entering the received order information into the order database,  
10 automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the retailer  
11 database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order and  
12 available for delivery from a corresponding participating product retailer,  
13 automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each product  
14 purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from the  
15 corresponding participating product retailer, thereby fulfilling the order,  
16 automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to each  
17 delivered product,  
18 automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each delivered  
19 product in the retailer database, and  
20 automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered product.
- 21 10. A multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution, comprising:  
22 a supplier database, the supplier database including product identifying information, product  
23 inventory information, and product pricing information for multiple independent  
24 participating product suppliers, wherein  
25 the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of  
26 participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and  
27 participating product retailers,  
28 the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product  
29 category, and  
30 the product inventory information is stored in the supplier database in a search table  
31 common to the multiple participating product suppliers;

1 an order database, the order database including order information pertaining to  
2 pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple  
3 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product  
4 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating  
5 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product  
6 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product  
7 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and  
8 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product  
9 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers; and  
10 a programmed order processor operatively linked to the supplier database and the order  
11 database, the processor being programmed for  
12 automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing information,  
13 and product inventory information from the multiple participating product suppliers  
14 and entering the information into the supplier database,  
15 automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order  
16 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the  
17 multiple participating product suppliers,  
18 automatically entering the received order information into the order database,  
19 automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the supplier  
20 database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order and  
21 available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier,  
22 automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each product  
23 purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from the  
24 corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order,  
25 automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to each  
26 delivered product,  
27 automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each delivered  
28 product in the supplier database, and  
29 automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered product.

30  
31 11. A multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution, comprising:

1 a supplier database, the supplier database including product identifying information, product  
2 inventory information, and product pricing information for multiple independent  
3 participating product suppliers, wherein  
4 the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of  
5 participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and  
6 participating product retailers, and  
7 the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product  
8 category;  
9 an order database, the order database including order information pertaining to  
10 pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple  
11 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product  
12 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating  
13 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product  
14 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product  
15 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and  
16 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product  
17 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers; and  
18 a programmed order processor operatively linked to the supplier database and the order  
19 database, the processor being programmed for  
20 automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing information,  
21 and product inventory information from the multiple participating product suppliers  
22 and entering the information into the supplier database,  
23 automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order  
24 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the  
25 multiple participating product suppliers,  
26 automatically entering the received order information into the order database,  
27 automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the supplier  
28 database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order and  
29 available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier,

1 automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each product  
2 purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from the  
3 corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order,  
4 automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to each  
5 delivered product,  
6 automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each delivered  
7 product in the supplier database, and  
8 automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered product,  
9 wherein the processor is further programmed for at least one of:  
10 enabling a first participating product supplier to conceal its identity from a selected  
11 subset of the multiple participating product suppliers for which ordered products,  
12 listed in orders placed with the eligible subset of the multiple participating product  
13 suppliers, are available for delivery from the first participating product supplier to a  
14 product purchaser;  
15 enabling the first participating product supplier to conceal its identity from a selected  
16 subset of the multiple participating product suppliers from which ordered products,  
17 listed in orders placed with the first participating supplier, may be delivered to a  
18 product purchaser;  
19 enabling the first participating product supplier to conceal from a product purchaser the  
20 identity of another participating product supplier from which an ordered product,  
21 listed in an order placed with the first participating provider by the product  
22 purchaser, is delivered to the product purchaser; and  
23 enabling the first participating product supplier to conceal the identity of a product  
24 purchaser from another participating product supplier from which an ordered  
25 product, listed in an order placed with the first participating provider by the product  
26 purchaser, is delivered to the product purchaser.  
27 12. A multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution, comprising:  
28 a supplier database, the supplier database including product identifying information, product  
29 inventory information, and product pricing information for multiple independent  
30 participating product suppliers, wherein

1 the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of  
2 participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and  
3 participating product retailers, and  
4 the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product  
5 category;  
6 an order database, the order database including order information pertaining to  
7 pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple  
8 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product  
9 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating  
10 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product  
11 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product  
12 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and  
13 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product  
14 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers; and  
15 a programmed order processor operatively linked to the supplier database and the order  
16 database, the processor being programmed for  
17 automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing information,  
18 and product inventory information from the multiple participating product suppliers  
19 and entering the information into the supplier database,  
20 automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order  
21 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the  
22 multiple participating product suppliers,  
23 automatically entering the received order information into the order database,  
24 automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the supplier  
25 database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order and  
26 available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier,  
27 automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each product  
28 purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from the  
29 corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order,  
30 automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to each  
31 delivered product,



- 1 automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each delivered  
2 product in the supplier database,  
3 automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered product,  
4 automatically aggregating order information pertaining to multiple orders placed by  
5 multiple product purchasers, and  
6 automatically issuing instructions for delivery of ordered products, listed in the  
7 aggregated order, from a selected participating product supplier, the selected  
8 participating product supplier being selected based on a supplier figure-of-merit.
- 9 13. The system of Claim 12, wherein the processor is further programmed for at least one of:  
10 automatically selecting the selected participating product supplier based on information in  
11 the supplier database; and  
12 automatically receiving bids from at least one participating product supplier and  
13 automatically selecting from among bidding participating product suppliers the selected  
14 participating product supplier.
- 15 14. The system of Claim 13, wherein the processor is further programmed for automatically  
16 selecting a newly-selected participating product supplier to replace the selected participating  
17 product supplier based on at least one of updated information in the supplier database and  
18 updated bids received from the bidding participating product suppliers.
- 19 15. The system of Claim 12, wherein the processor is further programmed for automatically  
20 aggregating order information pertaining to multiple orders placed in a physical location of a  
21 participating product supplier and placed remotely with the participating product supplier.
- 22 16. The system of Claim 12, wherein the processor is further programmed for automatically  
23 aggregating order information pertaining to orders placed with multiple participating  
24 product suppliers.
- 25 17. The system of Claim 16, wherein the processor is further programmed for automatically  
26 aggregating order information pertaining to orders placed with multiple participating  
27 product retailers.
- 28 18. The system of Claim 16 wherein the processor is further programmed for enabling a first  
29 participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of the multiple participating  
30 product suppliers for aggregating order information.
- 31 19. A multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution, comprising:

1 a supplier database, the supplier database including product identifying information, product  
2 inventory information, and product pricing information for multiple independent  
3 participating product suppliers, wherein  
4 the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of  
5 participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and  
6 participating product retailers, and  
7 the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product  
8 category;  
9 an order database, the order database including order information pertaining to  
10 pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple  
11 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product  
12 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating  
13 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product  
14 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product  
15 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and  
16 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product  
17 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers; and  
18 a programmed order processor operatively linked to the supplier database and the order  
19 database, the processor being programmed for  
20 automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing information,  
21 and product inventory information from the multiple participating product suppliers  
22 and entering the information into the supplier database,  
23 automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order  
24 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the  
25 multiple participating product suppliers,  
26 automatically entering the received order information into the order database,  
27 automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the supplier  
28 database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order and  
29 available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier,

1 automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each product  
2 purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from the  
3 corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order,  
4 automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to each  
5 delivered product,  
6 automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each delivered  
7 product in the supplier database, and  
8 automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered product,  
9 wherein the processor is further programmed for at least one of:  
10 automatically adjusting product pricing information in the supplier database in response  
11 to at least one of order information in the order database and product inventory  
12 information in the supplier database; and  
13 automatically adjusting local product inventory for the multiple participating product  
14 suppliers by  
15 automatically monitoring local product inventory information in the supplier  
16 database,  
17 in response to local product inventory information in the supplier database,  
18 automatically issuing instructions for transfer of products out of local product  
19 inventory of a first participating product supplier into local product inventory  
20 of a second participating product supplier, and  
21 in response to the transfer of local product inventory, automatically updating the  
22 local product inventory information in the supplier database.

23 20. The system of Claim 19, wherein the transferred local product inventory includes at least  
24 one of used product, rare product, collectible product, private-label product, and out-of-  
25 production product.

26 21. The system of Claim 20, wherein the processor is further programmed for consigning to the  
27 second participating product supplier at least one of transferred used product, rare product,  
28 collectible product, private-label product, and out-of-production product.

29 22. The system of Claim 19, wherein the processor is further programmed for at least one of:  
30 enabling the first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of the multiple  
31 participating product suppliers to which product inventory may be transferred; and

1 enabling the second participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of the multiple  
2 participating product suppliers from which product inventory may be transferred.

3 23. A method for multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution,  
4 comprising the steps of:  
5 under control of a programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
6 therefor, automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing  
7 information, and product inventory information from multiple participating product  
8 suppliers and entering the information into a supplier database, the supplier database  
9 being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including product identifying  
10 information, product inventory information, and product pricing information for the  
11 multiple independent participating product suppliers, wherein:  
12 the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of  
13 participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and  
14 participating product retailers, and  
15 the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product  
16 category;  
17 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
18 therefor, automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order  
19 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the  
20 multiple participating product suppliers;  
21 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
22 therefor, automatically entering the received order information into an order database,  
23 the order database being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including  
24 order information pertaining to  
25 pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple  
26 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product  
27 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating  
28 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product  
29 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product  
30 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and

- fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers;
- under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed therefor, automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the supplier database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order and available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier;
- under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed therefor, automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each product purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from the corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order;
- under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed therefor, automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to each delivered product;
- under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed therefor, automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each delivered product in the supplier database; and
- under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed therefor, automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered product.
24. The method of Claim 23, wherein the multiple independent participating product suppliers may further include product content providers.
25. The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of:
- under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed therefor, automatically issuing instructions for shipment of a delivered product from a corresponding participating product supplier to the participating product supplier with whom the product purchaser placed the order.
26. The method of Claim 25, wherein:
- the corresponding participating product supplier is a participating product retailer; and
- the participating product supplier with whom the product purchaser placed the order is a participating product retailer.
27. The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of:

1 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
2 therefor, automatically issuing instructions for shipment of a delivered product from a  
3 corresponding participating product supplier to the product purchaser.

4 28. The method of Claim 27, wherein:

5 the corresponding participating product supplier is a participating product retailer; and  
6 the participating product supplier with whom the product purchaser placed the order is a  
7 participating product retailer.

8 29. The method of Claim 23, further comprising at least one of the steps of:

9 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
10 therefor, enabling a first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of the  
11 multiple participating product suppliers from which ordered products, listed in orders  
12 placed with the first participating supplier, may be delivered to a product purchaser; and  
13 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
14 therefor, enabling a first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of  
15 products available from another of the multiple participating product supplier from  
16 which ordered products, listed in orders placed with the first participating supplier, may  
17 be delivered to a product purchaser.

18 30. The method of Claim 23, further comprising at least one of the steps of:

19 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
20 therefor, enabling a first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of the  
21 multiple participating product suppliers for which ordered products, listed in orders  
22 placed with the eligible subset of the multiple participating product suppliers, are  
23 available for delivery to a product purchaser; and

24 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
25 therefor, enabling a first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of  
26 products available from the first participating product supplier from which ordered  
27 products, listed in orders placed with another of the multiple participating product  
28 suppliers, are available for delivery to a product purchaser.

29 31. A method for multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution,  
30 comprising the steps of:

1 under control of a programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
2 therefor, automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing  
3 information, and product inventory information from multiple participating product  
4 retailers and entering the information into a retailer database, the retailer database being  
5 operatively linked to the programmed processor and including product identifying  
6 information, product inventory information, and product pricing information for the  
7 multiple independent participating product retailers, wherein the multiple independent  
8 product retailers offer products of a common product category;  
9 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
10 therefor, automatically receiving, from multiple participating product retailers, order  
11 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the  
12 multiple participating product retailers;  
13 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
14 therefor, automatically entering the received order information into an order database,  
15 the order database being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including  
16 order information pertaining to  
17 pending orders placed with multiple participating product retailers by multiple  
18 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product  
19 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating  
20 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product  
21 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product  
22 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and  
23 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product retailers by multiple product  
24 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product retailers;  
25 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
26 therefor, automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the  
27 retailer database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order and  
28 available for delivery from a corresponding participating product retailer;  
29 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
30 therefor, automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each

1 product purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from  
 2 the corresponding participating product retailer, thereby fulfilling the order;  
 3 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 4 therefor, automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to  
 5 each delivered product;  
 6 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 7 therefor, automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each  
 8 delivered product in the retailer database; and  
 9 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 10 therefor, automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered  
 11 product.

- 12 32. A method for multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution,  
 13 comprising the steps of:  
 14 under control of a programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 15 therefor, automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing  
 16 information, and product inventory information from multiple participating product  
 17 suppliers and entering the information into a supplier database, the supplier database  
 18 being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including product identifying  
 19 information, product inventory information, and product pricing information for the  
 20 multiple independent participating product suppliers, wherein:  
 21 the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of  
 22 participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and  
 23 participating product retailers,  
 24 the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product  
 25 category, and  
 26 the product inventory information is stored in the supplier database in a search table  
 27 common to the multiple participating product suppliers;  
 28 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 29 therefor, automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order  
 30 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the  
 31 multiple participating product suppliers;



1 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 2 therefor, automatically entering the received order information into an order database,  
 3 the order database being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including  
 4 order information pertaining to  
 5 pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple  
 6 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product  
 7 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating  
 8 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product  
 9 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product  
 10 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and  
 11 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product  
 12 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers;  
 13 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 14 therefor, automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the  
 15 supplier database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order  
 16 and available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier;  
 17 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 18 therefor, automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each  
 19 product purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from  
 20 the corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order;  
 21 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 22 therefor, automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to  
 23 each delivered product;  
 24 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 25 therefor, automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each  
 26 delivered product in the supplier database; and  
 27 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 28 therefor, automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered  
 29 product.  
 30 33. A method for multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution,  
 31 comprising the steps of:

1 under control of a programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
2 therefor, automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing  
3 information, and product inventory information from multiple participating product  
4 suppliers and entering the information into a supplier database, the supplier database  
5 being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including product identifying  
6 information, product inventory information, and product pricing information for the  
7 multiple independent participating product suppliers, wherein:

8 the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of  
9 participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and  
10 participating product retailers, and  
11 the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product  
12 category;

13 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
14 therefor, automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order  
15 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the  
16 multiple participating product suppliers;

17 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
18 therefor, automatically entering the received order information into an order database,  
19 the order database being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including  
20 order information pertaining to  
21 pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple  
22 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product  
23 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating  
24 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product  
25 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product  
26 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and  
27 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product  
28 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers;

29 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
30 therefor, automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the

1           supplier database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order  
2           and available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier;  
3       under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
4           therefor, automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each  
5           product purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from  
6           the corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order;  
7       under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
8           therefor, automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to  
9           each delivered product;  
10      under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
11           therefor, automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each  
12           delivered product in the supplier database; and  
13      under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
14           therefor, automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered  
15           product,  
16      further comprising at least one of the steps of:  
17          under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being  
18              programmed therefor, enabling a first participating product supplier to conceal its  
19              identity from a selected subset of the multiple participating product suppliers for  
20              which ordered products, listed in orders placed with the eligible subset of the  
21              multiple participating product suppliers, are available for delivery from the first  
22              participating product supplier to a product purchaser;  
23          under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being  
24              programmed therefor, enabling the first participating product supplier to conceal its  
25              identity from a selected subset of the multiple participating product suppliers from  
26              which ordered products, listed in orders placed with the first participating supplier,  
27              may be delivered to a product purchaser;  
28          under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being  
29              programmed therefor, enabling the first participating product supplier to conceal  
30              from a product purchaser the identity of another participating product supplier from

1           which an ordered product, listed in an order placed with the first participating  
2           provider by the product purchaser, is delivered to the product purchaser; and  
3           under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being  
4           programmed therefor, enabling the first participating product supplier to conceal  
5           the identity of a product purchaser from another participating product supplier from  
6           which an ordered product, listed in an order placed with the first participating  
7           provider by the product purchaser, is delivered to the product purchaser.

8   34. A method for multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution,  
9   comprising the steps of:

10   under control of a programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
11   therefor, automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing  
12   information, and product inventory information from multiple participating product  
13   suppliers and entering the information into a supplier database, the supplier database  
14   being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including product identifying  
15   information, product inventory information, and product pricing information for the  
16   multiple independent participating product suppliers, wherein:

17   the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of  
18       participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and  
19       participating product retailers, and

20   the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product  
21   category;

22   under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
23   therefor, automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order  
24   information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the  
25   multiple participating product suppliers;

26   under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
27   therefor, automatically entering the received order information into an order database,  
28   the order database being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including  
29   order information pertaining to  
30   pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple  
31   independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product

1 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating  
 2 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product  
 3 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product  
 4 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and  
 5 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product  
 6 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers;  
 7 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 8 therefor, automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the  
 9 supplier database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order  
 10 and available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier;  
 11 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 12 therefor, automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each  
 13 product purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from  
 14 the corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order;  
 15 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 16 therefor, automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to  
 17 each delivered product;  
 18 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 19 therefor, automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each  
 20 delivered product in the supplier database;  
 21 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 22 therefor, automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered  
 23 product;  
 24 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 25 therefor, automatically aggregating order information pertaining to multiple orders  
 26 placed by multiple product purchasers; and  
 27 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
 28 therefor, automatically issuing instructions for delivery of ordered products, listed in the  
 29 aggregated order, from a selected participating product supplier, the selected  
 30 participating product supplier being selected based on a supplier figure-of-merit.  
 31 35. The method of Claim 34, further comprising at least one of the steps of:

1 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
2 therefor, automatically selecting the selected participating product supplier based on  
3 information in the supplier database; and

4 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
5 therefor, automatically receiving bids from at least one participating product supplier  
6 and automatically selecting from among bidding participating product suppliers the  
7 selected participating product supplier.

8 36. The method of Claim 35, further comprising the step of:

9 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
10 therefor, automatically selecting a newly-selected participating product supplier to  
11 replace the selected participating product supplier based on at least one of updated  
12 information in the supplier database and updated bids received from the bidding  
13 participating product suppliers.

14 37. The method of Claim 34, further comprising the step of:

15 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
16 therefor, automatically aggregating order information pertaining to multiple orders  
17 placed in a physical location of a participating product supplier and placed remotely  
18 with the participating product supplier.

19 38. The method of Claim 34, further comprising the step of:

20 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
21 therefor, automatically aggregating order information pertaining to orders placed with  
22 multiple participating product suppliers.

23 39. The method of Claim 38, further comprising the step of:

24 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
25 therefor, automatically aggregating order information pertaining to orders placed with  
26 multiple participating product retailers.

27 40. The method of Claim 38, further comprising the step of:

28 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
29 therefor, enabling a first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of the  
30 multiple participating product suppliers for aggregating order information.

1 41. A method for multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution,  
2 comprising the steps of:  
3 under control of a programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
4 therefor, automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing  
5 information, and product inventory information from multiple participating product  
6 suppliers and entering the information into a supplier database, the supplier database  
7 being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including product identifying  
8 information, product inventory information, and product pricing information for the  
9 multiple independent participating product suppliers, wherein:  
10 the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of  
11 participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and  
12 participating product retailers, and  
13 the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product  
14 category;  
15 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
16 therefor, automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order  
17 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the  
18 multiple participating product suppliers;  
19 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
20 therefor, automatically entering the received order information into an order database,  
21 the order database being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including  
22 order information pertaining to  
23 pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple  
24 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product  
25 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating  
26 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product  
27 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product  
28 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and  
29 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product  
30 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers;

1 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
2 therefor, automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the  
3 supplier database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order  
4 and available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier;  
5 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
6 therefor, automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each  
7 product purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from  
8 the corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order;  
9 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
10 therefor, automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to  
11 each delivered product;  
12 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
13 therefor, automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each  
14 delivered product in the supplier database; and  
15 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
16 therefor, automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered  
17 product,  
18 further comprising at least one of the steps of:  
19 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being  
20 programmed therefor, automatically adjusting product pricing information in the  
21 supplier database in response to at least one of order information in the order  
22 database and product inventory information in the supplier database; and  
23 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being  
24 programmed therefor, automatically adjusting local product inventory for the  
25 multiple participating product suppliers by  
26 automatically monitoring local product inventory information in the supplier  
27 database,  
28 in response to local product inventory information in the supplier database,  
29 automatically issuing instructions for transfer of products out of local product  
30 inventory of a first participating product supplier into local product inventory  
31 of a second participating product supplier, and



1           in response to the transfer of local product inventory, automatically updating the  
2           local product inventory information in the supplier database.

3   42. The method of Claim 41, wherein the transferred local product inventory includes at least  
4       one of used product, rare product, collectible product, private-label product, and out-of-  
5       production product.

6   43. The method of Claim 42, further comprising at least one of the step of:  
7       under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
8       therefor, consigning to the second participating product supplier at least one of  
9       transferred used product, rare product, collectible product, private-label product, and  
10      out-of-production product.

11   44. The method of Claim 41, further comprising at least one of the steps of:

12      under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
13      therefor, enabling the first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of  
14      the multiple participating product suppliers to which product inventory may be  
15      transferred; and

16      under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed  
17      therefor, enabling the second participating product supplier to select an eligible subset  
18      of the multiple participating product suppliers from which product inventory may be  
19      transferred.  
20